

immediate consideration; fourth, by the discussion I propose, the useful or imperfect parts will be more immediately exhibited, and the misapplication of the old mode will be detected: hoping that this system, *to its extent*, will meet the most candid and liberal investigation, and be deliberately considered and compared with the old practice for the various canals in contemplation, or which may hereafter be constructed.

I remain, with all possible respect,

Gentlemen,

Your most obedient,

ROBERT FULTON.

London, March 1, 1796.

PREFACE.

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THE fear of meeting the opposition of envy, or the illiberality of ignorance, is, no doubt, the frequent cause of preventing many ingenious men ushering opinions into the world, which may deviate from the common practice. Hence, for want of energy, the young idea is shackled with timidity, and a useful thought is buried in the impenetrable gloom of eternal oblivion.

But if we consider for a moment, how much men are the sons of habit, we shall find, that almost the whole operations of society are the produce of accident, and a combination of events, rendered familiar by custom, and interwoven into the senses by time; inasmuch, that it is mere chance if the ideas are awakened to a sense of particular errors. But in such case it is fortunate, when they arise in a mind active to investigate, and which feels only contented to rest on the basis of reason; for without this, man must ever remain in a fixed point, and improvement will be at an end: the adventurer must therefore arm himself with

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